

Public Works Committee
Minutes, Tuesday, April 5, 2011
Town Room, Town Hall

Attending:

Committee: Steve Braun (Chair), Michael Cann, Don George, Christine Gray-Mullen, Charlie Moran, Guilford Mooring (Superintendent).

Guests: Ruth K. Miller, Phil Jackson, Lynn Grabowski, Caren Rotello, Vince Rotello, Donald Katzner.

Administrative:

Voted to approve minutes of March 1 as amended by Committee input: 5-0-0

Next meeting: May 3, 2011

Project updates from Mr. Mooring:

- a. Atkin's Corner: contractor has started work
- b. 2011 paving projects: the low bidder is Warner Brothers from Sunderland, and work is expected to start in April 11. List of streets to be paved is available on the DPW website.

New business:

Public Hearing on Speed control measures on Lincoln Avenue.

Mr. Braun cedes the chair to Mr. Moran to avoid conflict of interest.

Mr. Mooring explains that there has been approximately 30 years of experiments for speed control/volume on Lincoln and other streets in the area. Speeds are more than 30 mph, volume high, speed cushions do help control speed. Diverters created a separate "neighborhood" that did not work out because of partying, which led to the present effort to concentrate on controlling traffic speed, rather than traffic volume.

Some other efforts may help: University Drive traffic may be improved by: Big Y stop light and improvements to Rt. 9/U. Drive intersection; also improvements to U. Drive/Amity St. intersection. U. Drive/Mass Ave. intersection belongs to UMass...no plans at present to improve, but U. Mass is in Master Plan phase.

Mass. Ave crosswalk at Sunset creates congestion on Mass. Ave, so drivers try to avoid Mass Ave by driving through neighborhood.

Three basic options for trying to improve safety in neighborhood:

Option 1: for Lincoln: barriers (tried and found unsuitable)

Option 2: speed tables and 2 raised intersections

Option 3: do nothing

Mr. Mooring briefly reviewed the proposal to install 2 raised intersections (at Lincoln/Elm and Lincoln/McClellan) and two speed tables (between Elm/Amity and between McClellan/Fearing). These would be installed when the road is repaired/resurfaced...perhaps in 2012 or 2013.

Ruth Miller commented: other areas in town also could use speed control measures, some perhaps more pressing than the issues on Lincoln Ave. No town-wide plan, and she asks how decisions about speed control measures are made. Is there a strategic plan for town-wide speed control measures? Where did idea for speed tables and raised intersections come from? DPW or Lincoln residents? Answer: DPW.

Phil Jackson: this issue has never been framed by the neighbors as "Lincoln Ave" only, it has always been presented as a neighborhood issue involving also Sunset, McClellan, Fearing. Sunset and McClellan are due for repair this year. Since cost for tables and raised intersections is minimal, he recommends including these streets in the proposal for speed control measures. Notes that neighbors have long argued for a town-wide traffic calming policy but one does not yet exist.

Carol Rotelo: if choice is between closures or speed control measures, she would support speed tables. Primary goal should be safety. Though there are many other roads in town that require speed control measures as well.

Lynn Grabowski: When will Lincoln be repaved and, hence, when would the speed tables be installed? Mr. Mooring: earliest could be next year, but could also be later than that. Mr. Moran: roads are graded with a condition index which determines where they fall on a priority list of repairs. Ms. Grabowski continued: also, Lincoln is currently in such bad repair that Valley Transporter refused to pick her up, and she has difficulty riding her bike because of the potholes.

Phil again: traffic volumes and speeds have been documented as excessive, up to 70 mph. Again urges the Committee to advocate for installation of speed control measures on McClellan and Sunset this year since both are up for repair. Also stresses that the tables should be engineered to be effective, i.e. those on College St. , rather than the ineffective tables on N. Pleasant near the new roundabout on Eastman Lane.

Carol Rotelo: notes that the mean (average) of speed isn't appropriate when there's a skewed distribution, as there is with speed data. Median is a more accurate measure, and the median speed would be lower than mean because of the few drivers going at excessive speeds.

Vince Rotelo: Favors a raised intersection at Lincoln and Fearing, and also favors the current proposal for speed control measures. In addition, advocates that speed control issues be considered for any street up for repaving.

Donald Katzner: lived on Lincoln in 1975, and at that time there were issues about safety from excessive traffic and speeds. Was ignored for first 20 years, only in past 5 years has town taken the issues seriously. His request for a 4-way stop sign at Lincoln and Fearing was rejected, then, another decade later, was finally installed.

Hearing is declared closed.

Ms. Gray Mullen asks why not do speed tables/raised intersections on McClellan and Sunset when they are repaved if the cost is negligible? Mr. Mooring says he feels they are not needed. Mr. Braun notes that previous data exist strongly suggesting there *is* a need for speed control on these streets.

Since the “comment period” on this project is not closed, committee decided to defer a decision until the next meeting.

Public Hearing: Improvements to Spring St. Parking Lot

Mr. Mooring briefly reviewed the current plans (available on the DPW website), although no residents appeared for this hearing. The Committee has already reviewed the plans, but because the comment period has not ended, deferred a decision until the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Don George
Steve Braun